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**GENERAL NOTICES • ALGEMENE KENNISGEWINGS**

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**INDEPENDENT COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY OF SOUTH AFRICA  
NOTICE 37 OF 2021****EXTENSION OF THE USE OF THE TOLL FREE NUMBER FOR CHILD HELPLINE  
SERVICES**

1. The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa ("the Authority") hereby extends the termination date of the number, 080 005 5555, for Child Helpline services, to 15 March 2021.
2. The Authority previously published an amendment to the Numbering Plan Regulations, 2016 in Government Gazette No 43230 of 15 April 2020. Regulation 17(6) of the Numbering Plan Regulations Amendment, 2020 states as follows:  
  
*" nine (9) months after the publication of these Regulations, the code "116" will be the exclusive number for Child Helpline services."*
3. The 080 005 5555 tollfree number for Child helpline services was therefore to be terminated on 15 January 2021, and the code "116" was to become the exclusive number for Child Helpline services.

4. In support of the pending termination of the tollfree number for Child helpline services, licensees are encouraged to implement a voice recorded message advising the public of imminent changeover to the code "116" for Child Helpline services. Such message should be played on calls to the current tollfree Child Helpline number, as well as on calls to the code "116".



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**Dr Keabetswe Modimoeng**  
**Chairperson**

**Date: 14 January 2020**

## REASONS FOR THE AMENDMENT

- 1.1 On 15 April 2020 the Authority published an amendment of the Numbering Plan Regulations Government Gazette 43230 ("the Regulations"). The Regulations mandate the use of the short code 116 for Child Helpline services.
- 1.2 The Regulations amended sub-regulation 17(4) with the following insertion:

*"(j) the service code "116" is mandated for Child Helpline service. The Child Helpline service accessed, either by call or short messaging services, through the service code "116" shall incur no charges to the caller or sender."*
- 1.3 In addition, the Regulations were also amended with the insertion of sub-regulation 17(6) which requires that nine (9) months from the date of publication the short code 116 would become the exclusive number for Child Helpline services.
- 1.4 In terms of the above, the current tollfree number for Child Helpline services was to be terminated, and the code "116" was to be the exclusive number for Child Helpline services from 15 January 2021.
- 1.5 The reasons document further stipulated that an awareness campaign was to be led by the assignee of the code, i.e. Childline SA and the Ministry of Communications and Digital Technology ("the Ministry").
- 1.6 On 30 November 2020, the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), requested for an extension on the termination date of the tollfree number for Child Helpline Services, as well as a period for the dual provision of both the code "116" and tollfree number for Child Helpline services as follows:
  - 1.6.1 *"The planning of the awareness process had been adversely affected by COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and the resultant lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the Republic of South Africa";*
  - 1.6.2 *"The period left before the prescribed termination of the 080 is too limited to inform the affected beneficiaries and to have them ready of the termination of the 080 number."; and*

1.6.3 *"The ensuing period (December & January) poses its own challenges as it is the Festive period. Communities at large are more prone to focus on the festivities of the season and might not pay particular changes to the awareness messages."*

1.7 The Authority has acceded to the request from DCDT on the following grounds:

1.7.1 The Authority found that the period left before the prescribed termination of the 080 is has been limited by COVID-19 properly to inform the public of the termination of the 080 number.

1.7.2 The Authority found that there is a need to allow adequate time for the publicity on the rebranding of ChildLine SA, since its old branding was embedded on the 080 number that will be discontinued, noting that the branding process has to consider a dual usage period before it can be changed to reflect the 116 short code exclusively.

1.7.3 The Authority found that ChildLine SA will not adequately reach beneficiaries, who are mainly learners in their school environment, sufficiently during school closures and the lockdown period.

1.8 The Authority believes that the voluntary implementation of the voice recorded message will go a long way towards informing and advising the public on the change of a number that has been in use and publicised to its intended users (i.e. children) for a significant period. Licensees are also encouraged to use any of their available platforms to inform the general public of the impending changeover where this is possible.